

**MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND**

RESTRICTED

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COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE OF EPIZOOTICS (OIE)

Meeting of 2-3 April 1990

It is worth pointing out that the countries participating in the Working Group on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Regulations and Barriers are all, with very few exceptions, members of the OIE and therefore recognize the International Zoosanitary Code as the basic reference document for deciding on national sanitary measures to be applied to imports of animals and animal products.

No discussion in the Working Group or in GATT in general could have the effect of calling into question this commitment which stems from the international agreement setting up the OIE, to which 114 countries are now parties. It is therefore important to ensure that the decisions to be taken in GATT are consistent with the fundamental texts of the OIE.

As has been stressed repeatedly, the International Zoosanitary Code takes the form of recommendations drafted on the basis of solid scientific information, which offer a variety of strategies for importing countries depending on the sanitary situation of the exporting country and the type of product traded.

Hence, the OIE cannot subscribe to the contents of the informal paper prepared by the United States (NG5/WGSP/W/12), as the latter completely ignores the existence of the Code and draws a sharp distinction between the state of progress in work on hygienic conditions of foodstuffs and the situation said to exist as regards animal health.

This judgement can only be the result of a lack of awareness of the work done by the OIE. All delegations are therefore invited to look closely at the latest documents drafted in the OIE, which are sent to all the directors of national veterinary services.

These documents, which will be submitted to the International Committee of the OIE in May 1990, include two proposals that seem essential.

Firstly, there is the complete revision of the chapter of the Code dealing with African horse sickness, which brings a number of answers to the questions regularly raised in this Working Group. The revised chapter

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defines a disease-free country and area as well as an infected area and specifies the sanitary conditions for the import of horses and other members of the equine species according to their place of origin and their vaccination status, taking account of the latest knowledge in this field. The holding of equestrian sports in the 1992 Olympic Games partly depends upon the adoption of these recommendations.

The second document concerns rinderpest surveillance. It describes in detail the methodology to be followed to ensure scientifically that a previously infected country has become free of the disease, as well as the infection, thanks to the prophylactic measures taken.

Thus, even if there is a need to improve some provisions of the Code, particularly as regards Foot-and-Mouth Disease, it must be stressed that there is no need to generalize. The Code may be taken as a basis for discussion for the determination of health conditions in trade.

Nevertheless, the United States document underlines one undeniable truth, namely that the chapters of the Code which need to be revised will certainly not be updated by the end of the Uruguay Round negotiations. Priorities therefore need to be set, for example by selecting Foot-and-Mouth Disease and blue-tongue as a first stage.

With regard to Foot-and-Mouth Disease in particular, work is proceeding in the OIE, with the Chairman of the Commission on Foot-and-Mouth Disease and other Epizootics, on the establishment of a draft programme of work. This programme would include the various items already briefly alluded to, namely:

1. study of the epidemiology of the disease, in order to establish a revised definition of the terms "disease-free country", "disease-free area" and "infected area";
2. study of the risks of transmission of the disease according to the categories of products that may be exported, and treatment that can be given to the products in order to avoid such risks. It is here that the principle of recognition of equivalences should have its full effects;
3. finally, study of the consequences of the accidental introduction of the virus into a disease-free country or area, using modern techniques of modelling the biological and economic risks. It is obviously out of the question to require scientific experiments on a true scale in this area.

These are merely proposals which will have to be gone into in greater depth and revised by the experts who will take part in the work of the FMD Commission.

In addition, to assist in the implementation of this programme it would be most useful if GATT could officially lend its support, for example, by sending a letter to the OIE on this subject.

This would foreshadow the future links that should be established between GATT and the OIE, to which reference has been made in several of the contributions in meetings of the Working Group.

Finally, special thanks should go to the United States representative for the invitation he has addressed to other members of the Working Group to encourage their national technical experts to take an active part in the drafting and improvement of the International Zoosanitary Code; it is to be hoped that this invitation will actually be taken up by the other delegations.

In the case of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, it would be desirable for the countries or groups of countries represented here to inform the OIE of the names of their top experts on the various subjects to be discussed so that when the time comes the members of the FMD Commission can call on them to take part in their work.